DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 302 792 CG 021 383

AUTHOR	Shaughnessy, Michael F.
TITLE	Pornography, Human Mutilation and Psychological Dysfunction.
PUB DATE	87
NOTE	11p.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Crime; Emotional Problems; *Mental Disorders; *Pornography; *Psychological Patterns; Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS	*Human Mutilation

ABSTRACT

Pornography is widely available and inevitably linked to crime and abnormal behavior. Social scientists must be concerned with the long-term effects on consenting adults and children and adolescents of exposure to pornography and human mutilation. An experiment in which a treatment group is exposed to pornography and a control group is exposed only to sexual messages cannot be undertaken. However, there has been psychological, sociological, and forensic research which links pornography to pathology, deviance, and crime. Murder, imprisonment, sexually transmitted diseases, masochistic self-harm, prostitution, and other difficulties have been linked to pornography. The amount and degree of emotional difficulty and distress experienced by those exposed either directly or tangentially to pornography is large, including suicidal behavior, nightmares, and inability to experience sexual pleasure. Although periodically pornographic in nature, "slasher" films rely heavily on physical attacks of a perverted nature to shock the viewer. The key result is desensitization so that people exposed to X- and R-rated movies tend to moderate their attitudes towards women and violence. The measurement of variables and the effects of either treatment or negative exposure is critical. Increasing availability of pornographic materials should be of concern to parents, teachers, and the community. Counselors and therapists will be dealing with a greater number of people experiencing sexual difficulties. (ABL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED302792

Pornography, Human Mutilation and Psychological Dysfunction

Michael F. Shaughnessy

Eastern New Mexico University

Psychology Department

Portales, New Mexico

CG 021383

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Michael F. Shaughnessy

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Pornography, in it's various forms, is widely available and inevitably linked to crime and abnormal behavior. This paper reviews the effects of pornography, focusing specifically on early childhood exposure and a new variant, human mutilation. Social scientists must not only be aware of this societal problem and its ramifications, but its increasing pervasiveness and repercussions.

Sexuality, pornography, and related phenomenon surrounding us in various forms and formats. While television programs have become more livid, and M.T.V. has glorified sexual messages (both in music and the video aspects) V.H.S. and Beta video movies have become increasingly available. Almost in anticipation of the wave of sexual materials and programming, the then Attorney General Edwin Meese initiated a commission on "pornography". The five hundred and seventy page text, while attacked and praised, has done little to bring about social change in this realm. The committee, rather than trying to address the issue of "What is Pornography?" subdivided it into "classes" i.e. 1) sexually violent material, 2) non violent materials depicting degradation, domination, subordination or humiliation, 3) non violent and non degrading materials, 4) nudity and 5) the special horror of child pornography (1986, XIX, XX). The committee did not address human mutilation - an area tangential to both areas - one and five.

The investigation of the long term effects of exposure to "pornography" and human mutilation is fraught with dangers. Yet, as social scientists we must be concerned with the effects of both subtle and blatant exposure to not only consenting adults, but also to children, adolescents and young adults (those 19-21 living in states wherein 21 is

the "majority age). The "effects" of exposure can be construed as harm - in both a primary and secondary sense. The child/adolescent who is forced to engage in perverse sexual practices with animals or older adults suffers primary harm as opposed to the 17 year old adolescent who reads or watches pornography.

Empirically and experimentally, we cannot set up an experiment with a treatment group which is exposed to pornographic materials and a control group which is exposed only to the "routine" sexual messages of T.V., movies, books, magazines and videos. To knowingly expose subjects to any type or class of pornographic materials would be immoral and unethical. Longitudinal studies have not been conducted on subjects either exposed to, or are participants in pornographic realms. The methodologies relied on are case studies, interviews, and ex post facto research. However, there has been research - both psychological, sociological and forensic which links pornography to pathology, deviance and crime. The relationship is causal, not casual as is often misrepresented.

The following have been explicitly linked to pornographic materials, however. First, murders have been associated or directly linked to pornography. Also, imprisonment, sexually transmitted diseases, masochistic self harm (and death in certain cases), prostitution and other difficulties have been both casually and causally linked.

<u>Psychological Harm</u>

While the number of deaths linked to pornography is probably small, the amount and degree of emotional difficulty and distress experienced by

those exposed either directly or tangentially to pornography is large. The realms of psychological distress are as follows:

1. Suicidal thoughts and behavior.
2. Fear and anxiety.
3. Feelings of shame and guilt.
4. Fear of exposure through publication or display of pornographic materials.
5. Amnesia and denial and repression of abuse.
6. Nightmares.
7. Compulsive reenactment of sexual abuse and inability to feel sexual pleasure outside of a context of dominance and submission.
8. Inability to experience sexual pleasure and feelings of sexual inadequacy.
9. Feelings of inferiority and degradation.
10. Feelings of frustration with the legal system.

Tangential effects not purely psychological are linked with and/or directly related to pornography.

1. Loss of job or promotion/sexual harassment.
2. Financial losses.
3. Defamation and loss of status in the community.
4. Promotion of racial hatred.
5. Loss of trust within a family.
6. Prostitution.
7. Sexual harassment in the workplace.

The above "effects" are based on voluntary case studies. There are, of course, people who have been affected by pornography who are unable to offer detailed explicit information as to the negative effects of pornography and related involvement. These people include:

1. Obviously, those murdered during pornographic involvements or those who have over-dosed on drugs tangential to pornographic involvement.
2. Incarcerated criminals.
3. The institutionalized patient.
4. Those who have died as a result of injurious products e.g. sexual aids and aphrodisiacs such as nitrates and noxious, toxic chemical compounds.

Effects of "Slasher" Films

Although only periodically pornographic in nature, "slasher" films (such as the Texas Chainsaw Massacre and Toolbox Murders) are a relatively new phenomenon and rely heavily on physical attacks of a perverted nature to "shock" the viewer. A woman being killed with a power drill and people being dismembered are typical "plots". Linz (1985) has conducted empirical evidence on these types of "films". The key result is one of "desensitization" i.e. that people (in this case male college students) exposed to X and R rated movies tend to moderate their attitudes toward women, violence. While other experimental studies have been conducted, they have been methodologically criticized. Subjects have been predominantly male and volunteers.

Basically human life is degraded and in some instances is linked or associated with sexual aggressiveness or assault.

Limited Exposure vs. Cumulative Exposure

Whether negative affects can be discovered from one exposure to one type of pornography is difficult to ascertain. Further, whether either psychological or physiological effects can be determined is also hard to tell. The age of the person, the sex of the person, his/her prior exposure, religious training, and indeed prior sex education are all salient variables to be examined, and which are salient.

Negative Effects of Pornography via Disinformation

To state that pornography teaches false information is a major understatement. An analysis of pornographic materials indicates that sex is:

1. An involvement with "spanking, whipping, fighting, wrestling, tying, chaining, gagging or torture" (p. 489).
2. Involvement with "chemicals, handcuffs, gags, hoods, restraints, harnesses, police badges, knives, guns, whips, paddles, toilets, diapers, enema bags, inflatable rubber women and disembodied vaginas, breasts and penises."
3. Involvement with animals, and "neighbors, milkmen, plumbers, salesmen, burglars and peepers."
4. Probably the most critical bit of "disinformation" stemming from pornography is that "women find force or aggression pleasurable" (Donnerstein and Linz, 1986) relative to sex and specifically rape

5. A negative effect, totally ignored by the Commission was the deletion of the discussion of love, care and concern from almost all pornography.

The Problem of Measurement

In psychology, as in any other social science, the measurement of variables and the effects of either treatment or negative exposure is of course critical. Unfortunately, as has been found by Ellis, Kinsey and Master's and Johnson, sexual attitudes, feelings, behaviors and practices are difficult to discern, much less measure accurately and validly. People are simply leery of discussing attitudes and feelings regarding sexual proclinities and very religious people often refuse to participate in interviews and information procurring events.

Secondary to the above is the difficulty in psychometric instrumentation. Tests and projective instruments are not always able to discern emotional sexual trauma or repressed difficulties.

Further, while emotional attitudes may at some time be accurately discerned, there is difficulty procuring information (both physiological and psychological) relative to various aspects of the span of human sexual functioning and inter-relationships.

The Realism of Violence

Donnerstein, Linz and Penrod (1987) has amassed much data regarding the link between pornography and violence. They contest that it is violence, force and coercion which is often linked with pornography which is also dangerous. Reviewing the literature from several sources, the

authors express concern regarding the latent message of pornography that the female appears to find force and physical aggression appealing or pleasurable. Donnerstein et al has criticized the Attorney General's Commission in terms of its conclusion. Specifically Donnerstein and Linz (1986) indicate that "the commission has ignored the inescapable conclusion that it is violence, whether or not accompanied by sex that has the most damaging effect upon those who view it, hear it or read about it (p. 59).

They go on to express concerns about our mass media and possibly the interaction between sex, pornography and the messages of the mass media. They again rely on experimental studies lacking ecological validity. This of course is a major issue, but one difficult to ethically address. Violence against women is of concern. nay, violence behavior in whatever context should be of concern and should be vigorously addressed by the appropriate personnel.

Future Concerns

Increasingly available pornographic materials, in various forms, should be of concern to parents, teachers and the community. These outlets include:

1. Dial-a-Porn Services.
2. Cable Vision Network
3. Increasingly available VHS, VCR or Beta MAX.
4. Pornographic suggestions or messages on records, in lyrics and on video tapes e.g. "MTV".

Treatment Concerns

The psychological literature is of course replete with case examples of "treatment" of various extreme deviancies. Given the increasing amount of pornographic materials, in increasingly diverse mediums counselors and therapists will be dealing in greater number with people experiencing sexual difficulties.

References

Donnerstein, E., Linz, D. and Penrod, S. (1987). The Question of Pornography. New York: The Free Press.

Donnerstein, E. and Linz, D. G. (1986). The Question of Pornography. Psychology Today 12, pp. 56-59.

U.S. Attorney General's Commissions on Pornography (1986). Final report of the attorney general's commission on pornography. Nashville, Tennessee. Rutledge Hill Press.